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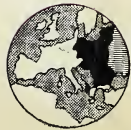
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ASSEMBLY OF CAPTIVE EUROPEAN NATIONS



This is volume 1 in a series of nine booklets. The Assembly of Captive European Nations undertook the publication of the series in response to numerous demands. Also, since much of the existing literature on East-Central Europe has been written from the outsider's point of view, there seems to be a need for informative material bearing the stamp of authenticity and first hand experience. Each booklet has been prepared by experts of the respective National Committee.

ASSEMBLY OF CAPTIVE EUROPEAN NATIONS

# ALBANIA


by

Athanas Gegaj and Rexhep Krasniqi

Prepared by Free Albania Committee

NEW YORK

1964

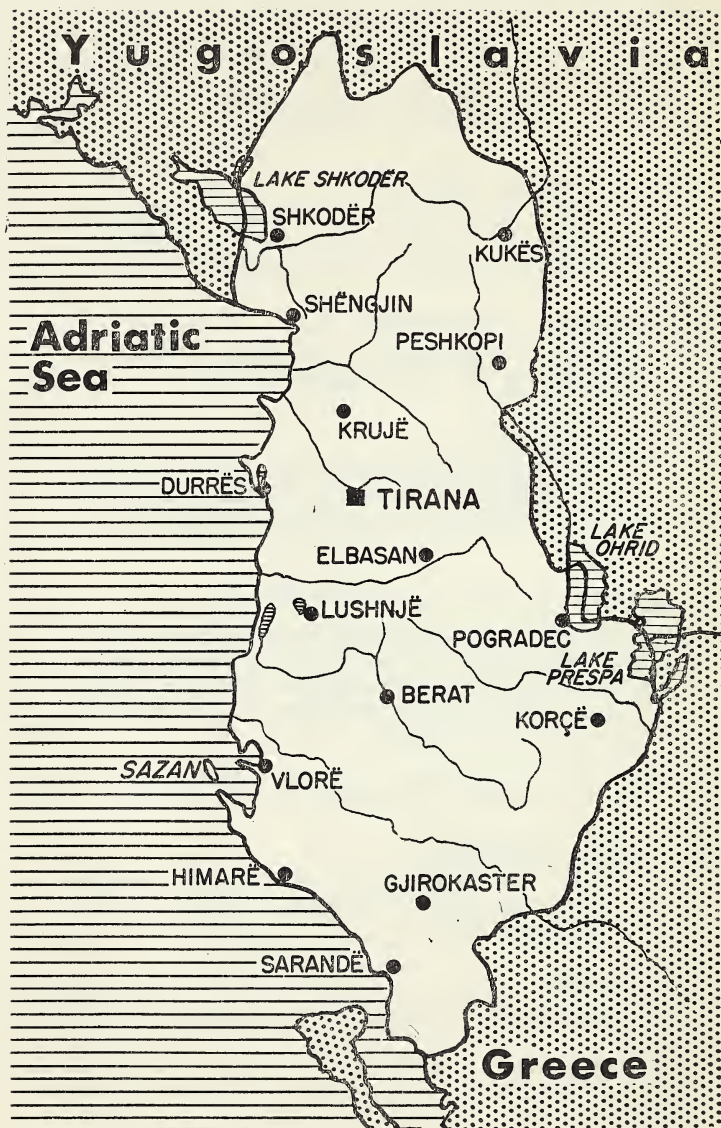


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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES	
1. Location and Area.—2. Land Forms.—3. Climate.—	
4. Vegetation.—5. Wild Life.—6. Water Resources.—	
7. Agricultural Regions.—8. The Economy. ... ..	5
II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	
1. Origins.—2. The Illyrians under Rome.—3. The Great	
Invasions.—4. The First "Regnum Albaniae". ... ..	13
III. THE HEROIC AGE	
1. First Appearance of the Turks in Albania.—2. Albania	
under Skanderbeg's Leadership.—3. Albanian Literature.	
—4. Under Ottoman Domination.—5. Albanian Indepen-	
dence. ... ..	17
IV. ALBANIA UNDER COMMUNIST REGIME	
1. The Communist Take-Over.—2. A Series of Tests.—	
3. "Socialist Achievements".—4. The Communization of	
Albania.—5. The Cultural Life.—6. Religious Persecu-	
tion.—7. The Economic Situation.—8. The Economic	
Situation of the Workers. ... ..	27
V. THE BREAK BETWEEN MOSCOW AND TIRANA ...	37
VI. FOREIGN RELATIONS	
1. Albania and the Western World.—2. Albania and Her	
Neighbors.—3. Albania and the Afro-Asian Countries.	
—4. Foreign Trade. ... ..	40
APPENDIX:	
Albania's Present Party and Government Line-Up (1963)	43
BIBLIOGRAPHY ... ..	45
MAPS	



## I.

# GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

## 1. Location and Area

**A**LBANIA IS a country situated on the southwest coast of the Balkan Peninsula and along the eastern shores of the Adriatic and the Ionian seas, bounded on the north and east by Yugoslavia and on the south by Greece. It lies between 39°-41' north; and 19°-16' and 21°-04' east. This land comprises the territory of Albania today. The terrain occupied by the Albanian people, however, extends beyond this area and penetrates northeast into Yugoslavia and south and southeast into Greece.

Present area: 10,757 square miles.

## 2. Land Forms

Albania is generally a highland country, and nearly two thirds of its area is covered by mountains and forests. The Albanian mountains can be divided into five groups:

- a) the Northern Albanian Alps;
- b) the Eastern Range;
- c) the group from Drini i Zi to Lake Maliqi;
- d) the Costal Range; and
- e) the Southern Albanian Highlands.

While the Northern Alps and the Southern Highlands form separate and distinct nuclei, the three central ranges extend along the length of the country from north to south, surrounding deep valleys and plains.



The Northern Albanian Alps, beginning east of Shkodër, and extending from the southwest to the northeast, reach Bjeshkët e Nemuna, or "The Cursed Mountains," the highest summit of which rises to a height of 8,852 feet. Then, lying north of the region of Dukagjini and east of the river Valbona, the Alpine ranges attain a height of 8,524 feet at the Maja e Hekurave, or "The Iron Crest." From this group, two mountains, breaking off to the west, encircle Shkodër from the northeast.

The Sharri, or Eastern Range, extending from the southwest to the south of Prizren, enters present-day Albania to form two high peaks, Koritniku, which has a height of 7,872 feet, and Gjallica e Lumës, which rises to 8,144 feet. Between them flow the rivers Luma and Drini i Zi, the latter of which is an effluence of Lake Ohri. Extending from the Luma region, the Eastern Range reaches the country's highest altitude at Mt. Korabi, which soars to a height of over 9,000 feet. Breaking away from the Dibra region, the Eastern Range ends where the Drini i Zi enters Albania. From here it extends eastward from Lake Ohri, dividing it from Lake Prespa, and encircles the Plain of Korça, re-entering Albania as Malet e Thata or "The Barren Mountains," and ending in Greece, near Florina.

The Central Mountain Range, stretching from Drini i Zi to Lake Maliqi, runs almost parallel to the Eastern Range northward from the Dukagjini Mountains to the Lake. To this group belongs the Çermenika Chain of Elbasani, although it veers away southwest toward the Coastal Range. Another mountain range, cut by the Mati River, starts from the north, winds around the Skanderbeg Mountains, also known as the Kruja, runs parallel to the coastal range of Kruja-Dajti, and then separates from the northern Mirdita regional group. West of Lake Ohri are located the Mokrra Mountains, which end at the Devolli River along the Qafa e Thanës, or "The Pass of Cornel-Cherry." Beyond the river they reunite as the Polisi and Shpati Ranges which face Guri i Topit, a peak rising to 7,803 feet at Grabova. The Central Range then turns westward and encircles the region of Kolonja and reaches the Qafa e Qarrit, where it joins the massif of Morava and Gramosh.

The Coastal, or Western Mountain Range crosses Albania from Shkodër toward the region of Lesh-Mati and farther south near Kruja and Tirana, reaching in Dajti, east of Tirana, some 5,287 feet. There it joins the Tirana Central Mountains and continues on both sides of the Devolli River as far as the town of Berat. West of Berat lie the Mallakastra Mountains, which extend toward the port of Vlorë and end near Tepelena.



The Southern Albanian Ranges do not follow the same direction. They divide at the Leskoviku and Berati Mountains, where the Tomori Peak rises majestically to a height of 8,134 feet. Still farther southward lie the Kurveleshi Ranges, of the Laberia and Delvina group.

### 3. Climate

Albania has a great number of climatic regions, which result chiefly from the country's topography. The tectonic fault, separating the mountain massifs and folded ranges from the hills and lowlands, forms a dividing line between a typically Mediterranean climate and the continental climate of the Balkan interior. The Mediterranean coastal lowlands are rainy, with mild winters followed by arid, hot, almost cloudless summers. The mountainous inner regions also have high temperatures, but lower on the average than along the coastland, where cool nights bring relief from the heat.

In winter, strong cold winds collide over the country with warm, humid air masses from the seaside, bringing heavy and frequent rainfalls. While the mountains are swept by cold waves and abundant snowfalls, freezing temperatures are seldom carried to the coastal region, and the average winter temperature remains rather high along the shores.

### 4. Vegetation

The climatic, topographic, and geological diversity characteristic of Albania accounts for the variety of natural vegetation that has developed. Riverine forests extend along alluvial belts and into the delta regions, as well as within the lowland. These forests contain mixed stands of willow, poplar, elm, pine, oak, and white beech. Scrub is widely found in the drier lowland regions and in the hills.

### 5. Wildlife

The mountainous areas of Albania are not a favorable habitat for wildlife, as they are heavily used for livestock grazing in summer and suffer from a shortage of spring water in that season. Moreover, the naturally scanty fauna has been depleted by huntsmen. Wolves, deer, and boar have been pushed back into the remote forests of the country. Chamois are rarely seen, although wild fowl is found in abundance in the forests and lowlands.

## 6. Water Resources

Albania has many streams and rivers, most of which empty into the sea within the country's frontiers. Five of its smaller rivers flow into the Ionian Sea, while 16 of the major streams flow into the Adriatic Sea. Due to the alternating periods of rain and drought, the rate of flow of the rivers is highly irregular. This is particularly true in the lowland regions. There, frequent flooding in the rainy winter months works economic damage and interrupts communications. The following table shows Albania's principal drainage basins, from north to south.

<i>Basin</i>	<i>Length of River (in miles)</i>	<i>Surface of Basins (in sq. miles)</i>
Bojana and Lake Shkodër	27	623
Drini	174	2,263
Mati	65	964
Ishmi	43	244
Erzeni	56	301
Shkumbini	91	918
Semani	157	2,305
Vjosa	147	1,682

## 7. Agricultural Regions

According to recent Communist data,<sup>1</sup> the total surface of Albania is divided into the following categories:

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Hectares</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Total land surface . .	7,187,000	2,874,000	100
Total agricultural and pastoral land . .	3,078,250	1,231,300	42
Arable land . . . . .	1,166,500	478,600	16.7
Forests . . . . .	3,206,250	1,282,500	44.6
Unproductive land . .	902,500	361,000	12.6

<sup>1</sup> *Anuari Statistikor i R. P. Sh. 1961*, p. 117.

## 8. Population and Regional Distribution

According to recent figures,<sup>2</sup> the Albanian population within the state borders has reached 1,736,000 at the end of 1962. Yet the total number of Albanians, in origin and language, is estimated at 4,000,000, about 1,000,000 of whom are living in Yugoslavia, along the north and northeast borders of the Albanian state. According to most estimates, another 150,000, many of whose forefathers left their mother country centuries ago, are living in Greece. Dating from still earlier times are Albanian colonies in southern Italy and Sicily. Their members are believed to total about 200,000. A very large Albanian minority also exists in Turkey, where more than 1,000,000 still speak the language of the homeland. About 60,000 persons of Albanian extraction can be found in the United States. Smaller Albanian colonies also exist in some countries in the Balkans and in the Middle East.

Most Albanian villages may be described as tribal or fortified places. The houses are built next to each other in the south but are more widely separated in the north. The typical Albanian mountain settlement is lost in a rocky wilderness, thinly covered by scrub oak trees, with virtually no roads, and separated by miles from the nearest inhabited places.

With the exception of Tirana and Durrës Albania has no large cities. The cities are located along or near the seacoast, or between the lowlands and the highlands, except for Korçë and Gjirokastër in the south.

The coastal towns had a small hinterland and did not extend their economic and cultural influence deeper into the interior of the country. In former times it was less difficult to travel by sea than overland between the ports of Vlorë and Durrës, or between the latter and Shkodër, via its port of Shëngjin. Lamentable roads, malaria swamps, flooded rivers, and danger of robbers were the major hazards of overland travel. Such towns merely served as shipping points for exportable agricultural surpluses and livestock, and as distribution centers for cereals imported in years of shortages. Berat, Elbasan and Tirana are the traditional gathering and distribution places for agricultural produce grown in the central lowlands. The animal products of the southern mountain regions have for years accumulated and been processed in the town of Gjirokastër and Korçë. This was the situation of the country before its independence.

The present-day state of Albania was created in 1920, just after World War I. After centuries of isolation and a chaotic national

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<sup>2</sup> *Zeri i Popullit*, Party organ, July 31, 1963.

history, Albania had to begin from scratch. The new state had to set up a system of communications. Roads and bridges, which would link various parts of the country and join towns to villages, were essential. New government and municipal buildings, schools, hospitals, military installations, and hotels had to be built. The growth of the new state required the construction of new plants and factories. But commercial life within the country and with the outside world quickly developed.

The following table lists the population<sup>3</sup> of the main cities and districts.

<i>Cities and Districts</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Total Population</i>
Berat	30,100	87,300
Durrës	63,645	129,700
Elbasan	39,075	107,300
Fier	19,830	114,100
Korçë	46,660	141,750
Kukës	3,065	48,450
Krujë	6,630	44,100
Peshkopi	5,480	79,400
Sarandë	11,525	49,150
Shkodër	43,950	130,250
Tiranë (the capital)	140,300	140,300
Tiranë (the district)	1,060	58,290
Vlorë	49,050	103,400

## 9. The Economy

At the time Albania achieved independence, her inherited economy consisted of a primitive type of farming and livestock raising. As a country of peasants, she had no important industrial establishments, and modern technical methods of agriculture were unknown. These facts explain to some extent the present backwardness of the country both in agriculture and industry, especially in comparison with the rest of southeastern Europe. Modernization proceeded slowly up to the Communist take-over, when an obsession for industrialization at all costs resulted in the regrettable neglect of agriculture and livestock, the principal natural resources of the country. Despite these obstacles, however, the country was able to make considerable progress, even in these areas, within the period from 1920 to 1960.

<sup>3</sup> *Anuari Statistikor i R. P. Sh. 1961*, p. 53.

The results of this evolution can best be seen in the following tables, which show the increase of production in the country's most important fields of economy.<sup>4</sup>

*Areas Sown in 1961 (in hectares)*

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Grain . . . . .	275,477
Fodder . . . . .	37,058
Rice . . . . .	2,967
Industrial Crops . . . . .	44,164
Vegetable and Potatoes . . . . .	19,543
Forage . . . . .	24,281
<hr/>	
Total . . . . .	403,490

*Important Agricultural Products, 1961  
(in metric tons)*

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Wheat . . . . .	94,609
Rye . . . . .	7,206
Corn . . . . .	154,104
Barley . . . . .	4,017
Oats . . . . .	11,753
Rice . . . . .	4,603
Cotton . . . . .	18,398
Tobacco . . . . .	3,152
Sugar-beets . . . . .	83,010
Vegetables . . . . .	94,239
Potatoes . . . . .	30,138

*Total Livestock in 1961*

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Cattle . . . . .	414,900
Horses . . . . .	48,700
Sheep . . . . .	1,585,500
Goats . . . . .	142,500
Poultry . . . . .	1,676,700
Mules . . . . .	17,600
Donkeys . . . . .	58,400
Pigs . . . . .	128,100
Bee-hives . . . . .	92,800

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

*Principal Mineral and Industrial  
Products in 1961 (in metric tons)<sup>5</sup>*

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Electric Power (kwh) . .	227,350,000
Crude Oil . . . . .	770,920
Coal . . . . .	289,053
Chrome Ore . . . . .	232,458
Iron-Nickel Ore . . . . .	358,465
Sawed wood . . . . .	165,546
Cement . . . . .	119,764

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Origin

**T**HE ALBANIAN people are descendants of the old Illyrians. They call their country Shqipni or Shqipëri and themselves Shqiptar, which means "Sons of the Eagle." The Albanians have to this day managed to preserve much of their ancient language, tradition, and national identity. They have been variously called, by others, "Albanese," "Albanais," "Albaner," "Albanski," "Arvanitis," "Arnaut," *etc.*—names derived from "Arbania" (Arbana), a region in Central Albania.

The Albanians, who belong to the Indo-European family of peoples, differ from other Indo-European strains, such as the Greeks, the Neo-Latins, and the Slavs, in language, customs, and history. Their ancestors, the Illyrians, lived along the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, from the river Po (Padus) to Akarnania in the south, including, in addition to Albania, those regions known today as Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, and parts of Greece down to Aeolia and Peloponnesus. Their land, known in Roman times as Illyricum (which meant "Land of the Free"), was bounded on the north by the Danube; to the east lived the Thracians, and to the west were the Celts. The Illyrians were related by tradition and language to the Thracians and the Epirots.

The Illyrians were linked with the Iron Age of southeastern Europe at a time when the names of Athens and Rome were unknown. This civilization was also called that of the Hallstatt, and it was in Hallstatt (in the Austrian Alps) that the first Illyrian tombs were discovered. Others were later found in Croatia, Bosnia, and Albania.

The Illyrians were divided into many tribes, as have been the Albanians up to our time. Some of them managed to form kingdoms, and they often fought among themselves, although they were sometimes bound together by intermarriages or other alliances.



As with all other ancient peoples, the origin of the Illyrians is recorded in legends; historically, however, they date from around the 4th century B.C.

The first person to unify the Northern Illyrians was Bardyllius, who was proclaimed King of Scodra (Shkodër) in the fourth century B.C. After uniting the various Illyrian tribes, Bardyllius invaded Macedonia, at that time ruled by Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. Since Philip was involved in a long war with Greece, the Illyrian king was able to capture parts of the country. Later Bardyllius turned south and conquered Epirus. There and in Macedonia he took the sons of the vanquished as hostages and sent them to Shkodër. Then, his struggle with the Greeks victoriously ended, Philip II turned on the Illyrian invaders and drove them out of Macedonia.

In the 3rd century B.C., Illyricum was ruled by King Agron. He managed, as had Bardyllius, to unite the Illyrian tribes: moreover, he built a powerful fleet and raised an army considered to be among the best of the period. Asked by Philip IV of Macedonia for aid in a campaign against the Greeks, Agron joined him in this venture. But during the celebration that followed the victory in 231 B.C., he died suddenly.

Between Illyricum and Greece lay the Kingdom of Epirus, whose people were related to the Illyrians by blood, traditions, and language. Epirus became famous during the rule of King Pyrrhus (called Burri, in Albanian) because of the wars he waged against Rome and Greece. Thinking himself another Alexander, Pyrrhus campaigned in Thessalonica, Athens, and Rome. In 280 B.C., with a strong army and a large number of war elephants — at that time unknown to the Romans—Pyrrhus landed in Italy and fought the Romans, but was unable to subdue them. Returning to Epirus, he gathered another army and marched on Greece, where, after a series of victories, he was killed by a brick thrown from the roof of a house in Argos by a Greek woman.

Agron's heir was too young to rule, and the task of governing the Illyrian kingdom fell to his widow, Queen Teuta. Ambitious, courageous, and unyielding, this feminine ruler plundered even Roman merchant ships. Her Illyrian pirates became the terror of the Adriatic and Ionian seas. Rome sent negotiators to the Illyrian queen. But when one of them was murdered, Rome lost patience at last with Teuta's depredations and declared war on the Illyrians.

Roman sea and ground forces invaded Illyricum, captured Corcyra (Corfu), Apollonia (Pojan), Dyrrhachium (Durrës), and later took Lissus (Lesh). Philip V, King of Macedonia and ally of Carthage, Rome's bitter enemy, came to Teuta's rescue. The Romans, who by this time were developing great military prowess, finally defeated

Perseus, the last Macedonian king, after a long campaign lasting from 216 to 168 B.C., thus ending Macedonian independence.

The Illyrians and the Epirots suffered the same fate as the Macedonians. In the last stages of the Roman-Illyrian war, Roman forces commanded by Paulus Aemilius, who had previously vanquished the Macedonians, defeated the Illyrian troops after 30 days of bitter fighting, and captured their last king, Gentius.

From Illyricum the Roman legions invaded Epirus and, in revenge for Pyrrhus' wars against them in Italy, devastated the land, burned 70 towns, and cast thousands of its people into slavery. These victories brought Rome great renown and riches. They also marked the beginning of Roman rule in the Balkan Peninsula.

## 2. The Illyrians under Rome

The lands populated by the Illyrians, the Macedonians, and the Epirots were divided into three provinces. The first, Illyricum, extended from the river Drilon (Drin) in the south to Istria in the north, and to the river Sava in the east. Later it included Dalmatia and Pannonia, and the capital was transferred from Scodra to Sirmium (now Srmska Mitrovica, in Yugoslavia). The second province, Macedonia, extended west to the Drini river, and to the Nesbus (Marica) river in the east, with its capital in Thessalonica (Salonika). Epirus, the third province, extended south from Vlorë to Corinthus, and included the Ionian islands. It bordered Illyricum on the north and Macedonia on the east. Its later capital, Nicopolis in northwestern Greece, was founded by Emperor Augustus to commemorate his victory at Actium.

Of these three provinces, Illyricum was by far the most important, for it brought to Rome valiant soldiers, able administrators, and six emperors. The emperors Claudius, Marcus Aurelius, Probus, Diocletian, and Constantine the Great were of Illyrian descent.

Under Roman rule, Illyricum enjoyed a long period of peace and progress. Its cities, such as Buthrintus (Butrint, Albania), Apollonia (Pojan) and Dyrrhachium (Durrës) became notable economic and cultural centers. Thus the Illyrians helped shape the destiny of the Roman Empire, until that fabulous creation was split into the Western and the Eastern Empires.

## 3. The Great Invasions

After the division of the Roman Empire in A.D. 395, Albania was repeatedly subjected to waves of invasion during the great European migration. The East and the West Goths and the Avars were among those who settled in Albania at varying periods, often disappearing without a trace.

Far more important than any of these, however, were the invasions of great masses of Slavic peoples from the northeast. Emperor Justinianus, who was of Illyrian origin, held them beyond the Danube, but after his death in A.D. 565, the Slavs, taking advantage of the growing weakness of the Byzantine Empire, steadily advanced across the Danube and spread throughout Illyricum, while the Bulgarians over-ran Thracia. These migrations resulted in great changes in the ethnic and geopolitical structure of the Balkan peninsula.

The Albanians opposed these foreign invasions, but—outnumbered and defeated—they were forced to take refuge in their wild mountains and in such fortified cities as Shkodër, Durrës, Berat, in order to escape total annihilation.

#### 4. The First “Regnum Albaniae”

A new factor in the political life of Italy in the 10th century A.D. greatly influenced the history of the Albanian people. Some Normans who had originally emigrated from Scandinavia spread gradually through Western Europe and founded a kingdom of their own under Robert Guiscard in southern Italy and Sicily, thus ending the ascendancy of the Byzantine Empire in Italy. Robert Guiscard tried to realize an old dream of conquering the Eastern half of the Byzantine Empire. In A.D. 1081, together with his son Bohemund, he led a powerful fleet across the Adriatic Sea and invaded Albania. After occupying Butrint and Vlorë, he defeated Alexis I, Emperor of Byzantium, at the walls of Durrës. This episode in the history of the Byzantine Empire is related to the revival of the name by which the Albanian people are known. Anna Comnena, daughter of Alexis I, mentions in her book *Alexiada* that the Albanians called themselves Arbanez; earlier, in the 2nd century A.D., the Alexandrian geographer Ptolemeus had described a province in Central Albania named Albanon, with its capital at Albanopolis.

This name is preserved today by the Albanians in Italy, who, long after leaving their homeland following Skanderbeg's death in the 15th century, still call themselves Arbreshë; and a region in southern Albania is also still known as Arbëri.

In the 13th century A.D. the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily was ruled by Charles d'Anjou, brother of Louis IX, King of France. Following the Norman invasion, he marched into Albania, occupied Durrës, and subdued the Albanian feudal lords. The Despot (ruler) of Epirus, who nominally ruled Albania at that time, became his vassal. Charles d'Anjou founded the first Albanian kingdom, *Regnum Albaniae*, and was proclaimed King of Albania in 1272. The Norman period in Albania, which was followed by the reign of the Angevines, inspired Albanian nationalism and paved the way for the first genuine statehood of the nation.

### III.

## THE HEROIC AGE

### 1. First Appearance of the Turks in Albania

**A**FTER the Norman period in Albania and during the time of Angevine rule, Albanian noblemen began to play a role in the history of their country. Among the earliest names were those of the Progons and Gjins, from Kruja's countryside; the Dukagjinis and the Balshas, in the north; the Thopias and the Kastriots, in central Albania; the Muzakas, the Gropas, and the Spatas, in the central and southern regions. The houses of Thopia and Balsha were among the first to distinguish themselves; later, the Araniti, the Kastrioti, and the Dukagjini came to the fore.

The Thopia family, which resided in Durrës (known successively as Epidamnos, Dyrrhachium and Durazzo), ruled central and southern Albania under the leadership of Karl Thopia. He brought under his domination even the Despot of Epirus, who resided in Yannina and nominally ruled Albania as part of the Byzantine Empire. Later the Thopia family launched a war against the Balsha clan which, having its center in Shkodër, dominated all of northern Albania. It was Gjergj Balsha I who, after having freed this part of the land from Slavic domination, pushed the Thopia back and extended his rule throughout the country, thus uniting the Albanian people.

During the Balsha rule, Shkodër was restored as the capital of the country. It was the policy of the Balsha rulers to cultivate closer relations with the West, to unite themselves with the Roman Catholic Church, and to free the country from Byzantine influence. Their rule, however, was of short duration, as a result of the continued challenge by the Thopias and by the Republic of Venice, which regarded the growing influence of the Balshas as a menace to its Albanian possessions.

In his conflict with Gjergj Balsha I, Karl Thopia went so far as to turn for help to Hajredin Pasha, the Turkish commander of Ohri. The first battle between the Turkish and the Albanian forces took place at the Devolli River, where Gjergj Balsha I was killed. Despite the heroic resistance of the Albanians, the Turks were victorious, thus beginning the long, valiant struggle of the Albanians against the Turks, which was to last for more than half a century. From Devolli the Turks marched north and occupied Kruja. At this point, however, they decided to withdraw immediately in order to avoid a clash with the Republic of Venice, a great maritime power with possessions in that part of the country. Meanwhile, the power of the Balsha family was steadily diminishing and was finally destroyed by the Venetians. Other Albanian feudal lords emerged and organized for continuing resistance to the Turkish domination of Albania.

In A.D. 1423 another Turkish army marched on Albania, occupying Kruja and the lands of the Kastrioti family. As a consequence, Gjon Kastrioti, the head of the house, became a vassal of the Sultan, and was forced to deliver his younger nine-year-old son, Gjergj, as a hostage to the Turks. It was Gjergj who became far better known in history as Skanderbeg.

Nine years later another Albanian prince, Andrea Thopia, heir of Karl Thopia, defeated the Turks in the Mati region in central Albania. His victory inspired a general uprising of the Albanians against the Turks. Many Albanian noblemen united under the leadership of Gjergj Araniti, a dominant personality of the time. He ruled the region that extended from Vlorë in the south, to Durrës in central Albania. The united Albanian forces defeated the Turks, first in Kurvelesh, then in Himara, both situated in the mountainous south. These victories elevated Gjergj Araniti to the stature of a national hero, and his name became renowned throughout Europe. Indeed, his exploits convinced the Pope, the Venetian Republic, and the Italian and Hungarian princes that the Albanians could be of invaluable aid in halting the Ottoman advance in Europe.

The struggle continued until the year 1443, when Gjergj Kastrioti, or Skanderbeg, returned to his country to become the leader of all Albanian resistance against the Turks.

## 2. Albania under Skanderbeg's Leadership

Gjergj Kastrioti was born in A.D. 1412. Given over as a hostage by his father to Sultan Murat II, he was converted to Islam and named Skanderbeg (Commander Alexander) by the Sultan. After



extensive training, he took part in military expeditions in both Asia and Europe, distinguishing himself as among the ablest commanders of the Sultan.

In 1443, during the battle of Nish, where the Turks were severely defeated by the Christian forces led by Hunyadi, King of Hungary, Skanderbeg, who already intended to return to his country, fought with great reserve. Then he left the battlefield and rushed to Albania, where he seized his father's main town, the fortress of Kruja (Croya) and raised the banner of independence, a red flag bearing the black double-headed eagle, the present Albanian national symbol. Thereafter Skanderbeg returned publicly to the Christian fold and declared war on the Turks.

Skanderbeg quickly called a meeting of all the Albanian leaders in Lesh (Lissus), to discuss plans for their unification and to organize forces against the Sultan. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the Republic of Venice, in whose territory the fortress of Lesh was located. The assembly of noblemen elected Skanderbeg commander in chief of the Albanian forces and pledged him their full support.

For eight years the hero of Kruja fought successfully against the Turks. His victories inspired great enthusiasm both among the Albanians and throughout all Europe. Alphonse V of Aragon and Naples, a close friend of Skanderbeg, offered all possible help, and the Republic of Venice placed him in command of the Venetian troops stationed in Albania. Pope Pius II was so gratified by Skanderbeg's successes in his struggle against the Turks that he decided to visit Albania and appoint him commander in chief of all the Christian forces. Unfortunately, however, the Pope died in Ancona without realizing his plans.

From 1451 to 1468 Skanderbeg repeatedly forced back great armies of the Turks and even humiliated the great Murat II and, later, his son, Sultan Mehmet II, conqueror of Constantinople, who themselves tried four times—in vain—to capture the Albanian hero's main fortress in Kruja, around which Albanian resistance against the Turkish armies was concentrated.

Skanderbeg became a living legend throughout Europe. Pope Nicholas V conferred on him the title "Champion of Christendom." He died in 1468 without having lost a single battle, his name deeply etched in the memory of his people. He is today regarded as one of the greatest military commanders in European history. After his death the Albanians, together with the Venetians, carried on their fight against the Turks, which continued until about the end of the 15th century. The Turks finally captured Krujë, Lesh, Shkodër, and

other great cities. They took revenge for the Albanian people's heroic resistance by slaughtering many who fell into their hands. Thousands fled to Italy or sought refuge in the wild mountains of Albania.

Under the Turkish domination, which lasted for nearly five centuries, Albania remained under the shadow of death and in total isolation from the rest of the world. Even its bonds with the Roman Catholic Church were severed. Not until the middle of the 17th century did Catholic missionaries reach the country. Under difficult circumstances they organized the Albanian Roman Catholic Church. It was under their influence also that Albanian literature emerged.

### 3. Albanian Literature

Albanian written literature was preceded by a colorful and rich oral literature of heroic songs, lyric songs, tales and proverbs, which can generally be divided, on the one hand, into that of Albania and of its population within Yugoslavia and Greece and, on the other, that of the Albanian colony in Italy. The oral tradition of the Italo-Albanians reflects the period when, after Skanderbeg's death, they left Albania and the country was occupied by the Turks. It tells of the wars of the Albanians against the Turks and of the heroism of Skanderbeg and other Albanian leaders. Within the living-space of the Albanian nation—that is, in Albania herself, in Yugoslavia, and in Greece—there are love songs and wedding songs, but most of the literature is devoted to heroic songs that the northern Albanians, or the Geghs, call *kangë trimnije*, or *kreshnikësh* ("songs of valor," "of heroes"), and that the southerners, or Tosks, call *këngë pleqërishte* ("ancient songs"). They relate events of the people's life in war and peace, according to the old traditional law of the mountains, the *Kanun i Lekë Dukagjinit* ("The Code of Alexander Dukagjini"), an Albanian feudal lord of Skanderbeg's time.

The principal theme of most of the heroic songs is honor, which is defended even at the cost of murder. Shame is regarded as worse than death, hence the high value attached to a heroic death. Other Albanian songs have historical backgrounds, and praise the role of Albanians in the Ottoman Empire, or the never-ending struggles against attempts by the Serbs and Montenegrins to penetrate Albanian lands. An example is the cycle concerning the deeds of the brothers Mujo-Halili, some of the most outstanding epic songs among the rich oral epics of the Balkan nations. They are usually sung to the accompaniment of the *Lahuta*, the Albanian highlander's musical instrument, similar to the Montenegrin-Serbian *Gusle*.

The earliest known documents written in the Albanian language originated in the 15th century and are religious in nature. This type



of literature continued for more than 300 years. The oldest published work is Gjon Buzuku's *Meshari* (Missal) of 1555, in which the language reveals many similarities between the two main Albanian dialects, the northern, or the *geg*, and the southern, or the *tosk*.

The first Albanian works written by Albanians in Italy also take religion for their subject. Of these the oldest is Llukë Matranga's *Embsueme Krishtere* ("Christian Doctrine"), published in 1592. As all Albanian schools and every element of national culture were strongly banned by the Turkish government in Albania, the first Albanian nationalist literature appeared in Italy, where the Italo-Albanians managed—even after four centuries—to preserve the language and traditions of their ancient homeland. They had created schools where Albanian was taught, and two of their people were the first to initiate nationalist trends in Albanian literature. Girolamo De Rada (1814-1903) published in 1836 *Milosaat*, a poetic creation, and *Rhapsodies of an Albanian Poem*, both based on Italo-Albanian folk songs and extolling the pre-Turkish freedom of the homeland and the wars against the Ottoman invaders. In De Rada's work, *Skanderbeccu i pafaan* ("The Hapless Skanderbeg"), the author describes the struggle of the Albanians under Skanderbeg's leadership against the Turks.

Camarda, on the other hand, was interested in questions of language. In his *Saggio di grammatologia comparata della lingua albanese* (1864), he demonstrated in a scientific study the antiquity of the Albanian language. In the Appendix to this work Camarda included examples of prose and folk songs from Sicily and Calabria, Albania itself, and Albanian settlements in Greece. Other outstanding writers of this cycle were Giuseppe Serembe (1843-1897), whose *Vjershe* ("Poems") sing of love, friendship, religion, and the ideals of freedom and humanity, and Giuseppe Schiro, whose main work, *Te dheu i huaj* ("In the Foreign Land"), praises Albanian historical personalities.

To reinforce the impact of the League of Prizren, which was organized by Albanian patriots to prevent the take-over of Albanian territories granted to Balkan Slavic nations by the Congress of Berlin, in 1878, Albanian intellectuals launched a program of nationalist literary activities. The efforts of Pashko Vasa Pasha and Naim Frashëri in this *genre* were especially distinguished; the first is the author of the elegy, *Oh, Albania, Unfortunate Albania*, which is still dearly loved by all Albanians, and the latter is considered a poet and apostle of Albanian nationalism. His books, *Bagëti e Buj-qësija* ("Cattle and Land"—1886), *Lulet e Verës* ("Summer Flowers"), a collection of some of the finest Albanian poems, and *Istori e Skënderbeut* ("History of Skanderbeg") are among the most inspiring works of this grand Albanian poet-patriot.

Earlier, Konstantin Kristoforidhi, of Elbasan in central Albania, had published translations of the Old and New Testaments (1867), in a prose that has become classic. Faik Konitza (1874-1942), prewar Albanian Minister to Washington, has greatly influenced Albanian prose with his masterly, simple language. His main work, posthumously published in English by G. M. Panarity (1958), was *Albania: The Rock Garden of Southeastern Europe, and Other Essays*, while *Në Hijen e Hurmave* ("In the Shadow of Palms") is a collection of Arabic fairy tales brilliantly translated into Albanian. Anton Çako, who used the pen-name Çajupi, was another remarkable lyric poet; his work, *Baba Tomorri* ("Father Tomorri"), expresses his deep feelings for his country. The most imposing figure of this era, however, is Father Gjergj Fishta, a Franciscan monk (1871-1940), who took part in the patriotic movement for a free Albania. The battle of his fellow-mountaineers in northern Albania against neighboring Slavs and Turks inspired him to produce the main epic work in Albanian literature, *Lahuta e Malcis* ("The Lute of the Mountains"). Vincenc Prendushi, another Roman Catholic priest, was a fine lyric poet who published an important collection of Albanian folk songs entitled *Kangë Popullore gegënishte* ("Gegh popular songs"); among other of his works, he translated Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* into Albanian. His best lyric works appeared in *Gjeth e Lule* ("Leaves and Flowers"). Dom Ndré Mjeda, a distinguished poet of the same region of Catholic northern Albania, in his lyric poem *Lissus* ("Lesh") reminded the Albanians of their Illyrian forefathers' bravery.

Aleks Sotir Drenova, writing under the pen-name of Asdreni, is a lyric poet of the south whose poems were published in three volumes: *Rreze dielli* ("Sunbeams"), *Endra e lotë* ("Dreams and Tears"), and *Psalmë Murgu* ("Monk's Psalms"). Bishop Fan Noli has spent most of his life in the United States. He has translated many liturgical books into Albanian, but his outstanding position in Albanian letters is based on his translations of such masterpieces of world literature as Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Macbeth*; Ibsen's *Lady Inger of Ostrat* and *An Enemy of the People*; and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*; he also translated such short poems as Longfellow's "Skanderbeg" (from *Tales of a Wayside Inn*), and Poe's "Annabel Lee," and "The Raven."

Lasgush Poradeci is one of the finest living lyric poets, who has had a great impact on the younger generation. He published two collections of his poems, *Vallja e Yjve* ("The Dance of the Stars") and *Ylli i Zemrës* ("The Star of the Heart"). While the latter's poems are typical expressions of the musicality of the Tosk dialect, Ernest Koliqi represents in his writings and poetry the Roman Catholic milieu of the north, and as a modern Western writer he has

managed to fuse the old and the new into a splendid unity. His main works, such as *Hija e Maleve* ("The Shade of the Mountains") and the *Tregtar Flamujsh* ("Merchant of Flags") contain short stories depicting scenes of Albanian life. Other works are *Gjurmata e Stinve* ("Tracks of Seasons"), a collection of lyric poems, and *Symfonija e Shqypeve* ("The Symphony of Eagles"), a melodramatic composition. He is also a master translator, particularly of Italian poetry, which has been published in a two-volume anthology, *Poetët e Mëdhej t'Italis* ("The Great Poets of Italy"). Living as an exile, he is a professor of Albanian language and literature at the University of Rome. Another poet and writer of the younger generation is Arshi Pipa, who after ten years of forced labor camp for refusing to follow the Red line, managed to escape to the West. Here he published a collection of poems entitled *Libri i Burgut* ("Book of the Prison").

The slight liberalization in literature and the arts, which took place in the East European Red states after Stalin's denunciation by Khrushchev in 1956, did not change the situation in Red Albania. There the regime remains the most fanatical follower of Stalin's tyrannical line in literature and the arts, as in all other spheres of the people's life. Of those writers who were not excluded from literary activity, sent to concentration camps, or executed, the most important today are L. Poradeci, V. Kokona, and N. Haki, who are not Communists but who had to follow the Party line of "Socialist realism" because of the pressures brought to bear on them. Even among Communist writers, the best remain those of the pre-Communist era, such as Dh. Shuteriqi, Sterjo Spasse, N. Bulka, A. Çaçi, Sh. Musaraj. Of the newer generation, the most promising are F. Gjata, K. Jakova and L. Siliqi.

#### 4. Under Ottoman Domination

Under Turkish rule, the old Albanian nobility was replaced by pashas, or governors, most of them of Albanian origin. Just as during the Roman Empire the Illyrians played a significant role in affairs of state, so did the Albanians under the Ottoman Empire take an active part in the country's administration. Many grand viziers, or prime ministers, were of Albanian descent.

Nevertheless, the arrival in the 19th century of Napoleon Bonaparte's army in the Balkan region revived Albania's hope of finally achieving an autonomous state. An early leader of this liberation movement was Ali Pasha Tepelena, who by 1812 had extended his authority over southern Albania, parts of Macedonia, and northern Greece. He ruled for 32 years as Despot from his residence in Yannina. Because of his dealings with France and England, Sultan Mahmut II

ordered a military campaign against him. After two years of resistance, he gave himself up and was executed.

Tepelena's ideas of liberation, however, inspired both the Albanians and the Greeks. The latter were the first to regain national independence, strongly assisted by other European nations. The Albanian people, left to their own resources, were unsuccessful, despite attempts of one of their leaders, Mustafa Pasha Bushati, of Shkodër, to achieve Albanian freedom. Only after the defeat of Turkey by Russia in 1877 did the Albanian movement for independence begin to take shape. The Treaty of San Stefano, which followed shortly thereafter, gave the Balkan Slavic nations large areas of Albanian territory. But the Great Powers of Europe, afraid of the growing might of Russia, refused to recognize the treaty and called the Congress of Berlin to consider the situation that prevailed. Albanian leaders, to prevent any agreement damaging to their country, convened in Prizren, an Albanian city now within Yugoslavian borders, and created the League of Prizren to defend the rights of the Albanian nation.

Although the Congress of Berlin rejected the San Stefano accord, Albania did not escape serious territorial losses. The League's protest was ignored, and Serbia quickly occupied the Albanian territory assigned to it, while Montenegro tried in vain to annex its own shares. Then the Congress decided to award to Montenegro the Albanian Adriatic ports of Ulqin and Tivar. To enforce this decision, the Great Powers sent their combined fleets to the spot, while ordering the Turks to send an army to subdue Albanian resistance and deliver these two points to Montenegro. Despite this setback, the Albanians were able to gain their freedom in 1912, after 30 years of determined efforts and sacrifices. But again the Great Powers, from motives of political self-interest, decided to please Albania's neighbors by donating to them extensive territories populated by Albanians.

## 5. Albanian Independence

Albania was the last Balkan state to achieve national independence. The Great Powers continued, as in the past, to follow the anti-Albanian policies of the Congress of Berlin.

Yet Albanian patriots within their own state, cooperating closely with others scattered through various countries of Europe and America, were again able to organize the resistance. They had recognized the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, and prepared quickly to exploit it. Playing an important role in this decisive move was Ismail Qemal Vlora, head of the liberal opposition in the first Turkish parliament. The chaos



created by the wars between the Balkan League—composed of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece—and the Turkish Empire eventually brought about the occupation by neighboring states of large areas populated by Albanians. Ismail Qemal rushed to Vlora and, in the presence of delegates from all parts of the country, formed a national convention which proclaimed Albanian independence on November 28, 1912.

An Albanian government was set up with Ismail Qemal as prime minister and Dom Nikollë Kaçorri as deputy premier. Immediately after its creation, the Albanian government, actively supported by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in part by Italy, was recognized and guaranteed by the Conference of Ambassadors of the Great Powers in London, which decided on the spot to send a mission to study the borders of the new state. The establishment of demarcation lines was made difficult by the attempts of neighboring countries to annex as much Albanian territory as possible. Finally, in 1913, the boundaries were fixed, handing over to Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece wide tracts of vital economic importance, together with almost half the Albanian population. This left the newly created state in a precarious situation.

During World War I, Albania was occupied by the armed forces of Austro-Hungary, Italy, and France, each one installing local administration and civil services within its separate zone. At the end of the war, Albania remained divided between France and Italy, the latter holding the larger part.

At the Paris Peace Conference, Italy revealed its intentions to transform Albania into an Italian protectorate, while the Serbs and Greeks demanded additional parts of the Albanian state, already mutilated by the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913. Because of continued debate among the victorious European Powers as to whether to recognize the Albanian state or to divide it among their smaller Balkan allies, the country's fate remained highly uncertain.

Faced with this exigency, the Albanians again took up arms and in an all-out assault freed the Albanian port of Vlorë, an Italian stronghold during the war. They quickly organized a new administration and set up a resistance force to meet any eventual threat to the country. As a result of these efforts, a National Congress convened in Lushnje, which drafted a protest to the Paris Conference against its partition, demanding independence for Albania "within its ethnic and natural frontiers." Thus was created the first stable postwar government, with Tirana as its capital. Finally, the Paris Conference, through the intervention of President Woodrow Wilson

of the United States, recognized the Albanian state, within the boundaries fixed in 1913.

At the Congress in Lushnje a young man, Ahmet Zogu, heir of a noble family of Mati, particularly distinguished himself. He was destined to play a great role in the future political life of Albania.

Until 1924 a democratic government, headed by a council of four and chosen by a freely elected parliament and senate, administered the country during the first difficult period of a new state. But in July of that year the opposition party, in cooperation with army officers, staged a revolution which overthrew the government of the Popular Party. Its head, Ahmet Zogu, fled to Yugoslavia, while a new left-oriented progressive government was immediately formed, headed by Bishop Fan S. Noli. Six months later, this government was overthrown by a counter-revolution led by Zogu. Albania became first a republic, then in 1928 was transformed into a monarchy, which it remained until April 7, 1939. Ahmet Zogu was proclaimed Zog I, King of the Albanians, a title which included symbolically the numerous Albanian minorities in Yugoslavia and Greece.

Mistakes were inevitable during the early period, but the country achieved notable progress in the political, economic, and cultural fields, as well as in construction, communications, and civil services. Special attention was given to schools. Albanian students were sent to universities abroad to qualify them for the tasks of developing the country. American organizations founded a vocational school in Tirana and an agricultural school in Kavaja, to train young Albanians for service in various important specialized areas.

Thus Albania became a steadily progressing state and a strong factor for peace in that troubled region of the Balkan peninsula. Mussolini's fascist Italy interrupted this normal evolution, however, by occupying Albania on April 7, 1939, in an action intended to launch Italy on a path toward further domination of the Balkans. After stiff resistance by the small Albanian army, King Zog was compelled to flee the country with many of his officials. During the fascist domination between 1939 and 1943 and during the Nazi occupation from 1943 to 1944, various governments were formed, but their authority was sharply restricted by the occupying forces; moreover, they of course lacked the support of the majority of the people.

## IV.

### ALBANIA UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME

#### 1. The Communist Take-over

**S**OON AFTER Albania's occupation by fascist Italy, the Albanian people rose up against this foreign domination in a struggle which eventually grew into an organized national armed resistance. The Albanian Reds, however, launched their resistance movement only after Germany attacked the USSR.

While almost all political parties and groups were united against the Italian fascists, who clearly intended to turn Albania into a mere colony, some leaders of the nationalist parties displayed reluctance to fight the German invaders, who had promised the integration of Albania within her own ethnical borders. Profiting from this situation and adroitly concealing its true aims, the Communist Party managed, in the name of "national liberation," to outmaneuver its opponents, the genuine nationalist movement.

The Albanian Communist Party and its "National Liberation Movement" was in fact organized by Yugoslav Communist agents, and was politically and ideologically directed by Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the Allied Command in Italy supplied the Party with all the material necessary to conduct its campaign. Thus the Communist Army was able to win the local war against the nationalist forces, and when the German Army withdrew from the country, it became master of Albania. A provisional government headed by Enver Hoxha, the Party's first secretary, had already been formed in October, 1944 in Berat, installing itself in Tirana, the Albanian capital, as "the government of liberated Albania."

The transition to communism in Albania began in the earliest days of the new regime. By the end of November, 1944, the Party



had consolidated its position in the country through a campaign of unprecedented terrorism. Many of the opposing leaders of the nationalist forces fled to the West. Others were brought before "People's Courts," where they were charged with war crimes, fascism, or simply as enemies of the people. The real purpose of the trials was to do away with every element that might prove inimical to the new regime. Within a decade some 15,000 people were executed or murdered without trial, many perishing in forced labor camps, while another estimated 15,000 were thrown into prisons and labor camps for various "political" offenses, where they languish today.

Elections for the Constituent Assembly were held in December, 1945. During the debate on the electoral law, Gjergj Kokoshi, a professor of classical philology and a non-Communist leader of the National Liberation Front, as well as the regime's minister of education and culture, strongly objected to the undemocratic spirit of the election procedure. For this he was arrested and later sentenced to life imprisonment. Although provisions were ostensibly made for the casting of "opposition" ballots, in compliance with a stipulation by the victorious powers of World War II, the police-organized terror of the Party made any opposition impossible.

The Democratic Front, a new Communist agency replacing the former National Liberation Front, won a sweeping election "victory" for its single list of candidates.

In January, 1946, the Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy and proclaimed Albania a "People's Republic." In March, the new Constitution was promulgated. The Constituent Assembly, which became the "People's Assembly," appointed the members of the Presidium, following the Soviet pattern in Yugoslavia. On this occasion Riza Dani, a non-Communist leader of the National Liberation Movement and deputy of Shkodër, refused to accept the antiparliamentary nature of the Constitution's promulgation. Accused of treason, he was executed after the usual mock trial. The same fate was meted out to another group of deputies who had objected to the narrow, Soviet-oriented nature of the regime, and who had urged that relations be opened with the West. Among those executed were Shefqet Beja, Sheh Karbunara and his son Hysen, as well as Abdyl Kokoshi, Uan Filipi, Selahedin Toto, and Sulo Klosi. Some 16 deputies of the first legislature were thus liquidated in one way or another.

## 2. A Series of Tests

The present Communist leaders of Albania have during the past decades claimed to have emerged "victorious" through a series of inner tests which have, in fact, seriously endangered their rule. The

people's opposition to the regime was perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that Albanian nationalist guerrilla forces continued their long and bloody resistance in the mountainous regions of the country. Two revolts, that of the Kelmendi region in January, 1945, and that of the Postripa in Northern Albania, were particularly grave threats to the regime. The guerrilla forces continued their resistance despite the lack of any aid from the Free World, yet finally, after eight years of merciless and ceaseless pursuit, the regime was able to eliminate all organized armed resistance in 1952.

The dependence of the Albanian Communist Party on its Yugoslav sister Party during the "liberation" war became in time more and more marked. Albania was in reality a Yugoslav-ruled country, and plans for the merger of Albania as the seventh federal republic of Yugoslavia were under way. It was to be foreseen that the new federal Yugoslav republic would include in its administration the Albanian-populated regions of Kossova and Metohija, which Albania has always claimed as integral parts of the nation.

A serious danger threatened the present Albanian leaders on the occasion of the first conflict between Moscow and Belgrade in 1948. The ruling class of Tirana was sharply divided over the question, whether to follow Stalin or Tito. The Stalinist group, however, led by Party Secretary Enver Hoxha, who was at that time overshadowed by Belgrade's chief agent, Koçi Xoxe, used this opportunity to accuse Xoxe of treason both to the Party and to the nation. He and many of his followers were arrested, tried in the usual Communist manner, and executed. Yugoslavia strongly denounced these hostile acts of Tirana, but it could do nothing to prevent them, since Tirana had the full backing of the Kremlin.

In February, 1951, the regime survived another revolt from within the Party ranks. The revolt culminated in bomb explosions in the Soviet legation at Tirana, where an important joint conference of Soviet diplomats and Albanian Red leaders had been called. The government, accusing "reactionaries," rounded up some 50 innocent people, among them Miss Sabiha Kasimati, a biology professor, and Manush Peshkëpia, a young writer and poet, and had all of them shot without trial.

In 1956, during the Hungarian revolution, strong signs indicated that the Albanians would join the Hungarians in their struggle for freedom. But the bloody suppression of the uprising by Soviet tanks and the non-intervention of the Free World prevented a similar revolution in Albania. During the Party meetings in the Tirana district in the summer of the same year, Party leaders were violently criticized by rank-and-file delegates for their exploitation of the

working class to the point of starvation, while they lived in abundance and luxury. The rebels were promptly silenced through a sweeping purge, which struck hard at the Party's roots.

Through all these years, the Party chief, Enver Hoxha, and the premier, Mehmet Shehu, having divided power between themselves, managed to keep the Party and the country under their strict control.

### 3. "Socialist Achievements"

Apart from the mere fact of its survival, the Communist regime in Albania has scored a series of other "Socialist achievements."

The first „achievement" was to transform the entire population into slave workers. To accomplish this, the Red rulers created an extensive and all-pervading network of agents whose task has been to keep all citizens—men and women, young and old—in perpetual fear and agitation, and thus to blackmail them into working for the state.

The second "achievement" has been to make the people conform, or at least to pretend outwardly to believe in the Marxist-Leninist Party line. The extreme pressures of Party indoctrination have driven every citizen to obey blindly, and even to proclaim his approval of the Party, or else risk death or starvation.

The third "achievement" has been the systematic destruction of traditional Albanian social values for the benefit of that all-powerful monster called the "Socialist state." The people, "liberated" from the ties of traditional society, frightened and disoriented, have been forcibly regimented into new organizations, which are cogs of the Red state machinery of control. The new organizations of the "classless Socialist state" are: the various types of collectives, the trade unions, the women's associations, the youth and sports organizations, and many other party-affiliated organizations. The "big brother"—or Party leadership—has thus achieved total control of every individual and of the entire nation. The people continually receive orders as to how they are to work, talk, act, and even think.

### 4. The Communization of Albania

Once the Communist regime had consolidated its control over the country, the process of transforming Albania into a Communist state was intensified. Yugoslav advisers and experts increased in number and all who resented their growing power were ruthlessly eliminated.

After the break between Stalin and Tito in 1948, the direction of the communization of Albania passed from Yugoslavia to the Soviet

Union. Albania became a satellite of Moscow, and its leaders' policy became one of complete conformity to that of the Kremlin. While no troops were sent to Albania, a great influx of Soviet technicians and experts did take place. Their presence amounted, in fact, to a Soviet occupation of the country. Under Stalin's influence, Albania was finally included, in 1953, in the Warsaw Pact, along with the other European Communist countries. After a so-called "package deal" with the Western powers, Moscow managed to have Albania admitted to the United Nations in 1955.

The first stage in the transformation of Albania into a Communist society was the nationalization of all banks, mines, petroleum industries, large farms, and other industrial and agricultural enterprises, without any compensation to the owners. This was followed by the confiscation of all private property. Private land, industrial plants, factories, warehouses, shops of every kind, hotels, restaurants, and houses belonging to so-called "reactionaries" were seized by the government without compensation. Business people had to surrender the entire assets in gold, bank notes, or foreign currencies that they had deposited in banks or hoarded in their homes. By these means the Red regime achieved the following objectives:

- a) it took under its control the entire national wealth and resources; and
- b) it forced the Albanian people to live in a state of extreme poverty, totally dependent upon the regime.

## 5. The Cultural Life

In the cultural life, notable changes took place. Where illiteracy was once at an extremely high level, in 1963-1964 some 400,000 students attended all kinds of state schools. Illiteracy has declined considerably and could well disappear within a few years. The state has increased the number of schools, especially elementary schools, where the introduction to Red propaganda and dogma begins. The school system is also being reorganized in order eventually to provide technicians and skilled workers for industries, agriculture, and various trades—all this, of course, at the expense of the idea of a general and liberal education. The Tirana State University created in 1957 by combining several former institutes specializing in various fields, ranks among the main accomplishments of the regime. Special care is given to the development of music, dramatic and operatic theaters, ballet, and the other arts, all as instruments of

Party propaganda, and in order to distract the people's attention from the hardships of daily life.

Notwithstanding all this, the development of cultural life in Communist Albania reveals one of the most brutal and inhuman aspects of Red rule in European countries. From the start, the regime imposed the Red Party line on the literary, as on the rest of the country's cultural life. In order to further Communist aims, the Albanian Writers and Artists Union was created, which included most of Albania's intellectuals, of whom only a few are Communists. As any cultural activity outside the Union is impossible, the Party has by this means achieved complete control of the country's cultural life. Those who refused to follow the official Party line were in one way or another eliminated, most of them shot or hanged, or left to perish in slave labor camps. Some of the most outstanding victims of the Red terror who suffered this fate have been: Father Anton Arapi, a well-known writer and preacher; Father Bernardin Palaj, a distinguished poet; Father Gjon Shllaku, a prominent writer; Lazer Shantoja, poet and writer; Father Viktor Volaj, writer and literary critic; Ndre Zadejfa, poet; Father Donat Kurti, folklorist, Msgr. Vinçence Prendushi, illustrious poet who was tortured to death in a labor camp; the octogenarian Ndoc Nikaj, dean of Albanian writers, who died in prison; Kolë Prela, literary critic; Selahedin Toto, political writer and translator of Western literary works; Qemal Draçini, a promising young writer, and Aleks Mavraqi and Nebil Çika, noted newsmen.

Even after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, the Albanian Communist leadership has remained utterly fanatical in matters of literature and the arts. Thus the entire literary production has served as a means of Party propaganda, and its value as art is most insignificant indeed.

## 6. Religious Persecution

In order to destroy all religious life in Albania, the Communists have tried for years to reduce the entire religious structure of the country to spiritual and functional ineffectuality, while simultaneously exploiting whatever formal power the churches may possess in support of the aims of militant communism for world conquest.

Three trends are to be seen in the regime's policy toward religion in Albania: weakening of the power of Roman Catholicism, which had a solid organization and strong ties with the West; control of Islam, which is tolerated because of its propaganda value in the Moslem countries of Asia and Africa; and recognition of the value



of Eastern Orthodoxy as an instrument for mobilizing the Orthodox population behind the regime's policy. (Catholicism claims about 10 per cent, Islam 70 per cent, and Orthodoxy 20 per cent of the country's population).

Methods of depriving the churches of their income, curbing their influence, and outlawing religious instructions were invoked in the early days of Red rule by the confiscation of monasteries, schools, seminaries, libraries, and large properties. According to new laws and especially promulgated orders, the election and appointment of personnel of all churches must be approved by the regime, and all religious communities are obliged to send immediately to the council of ministers all pastoral letters, messages, speeches, and memoranda which are to be printed or made public. Further, the law requires that the education of youth is to be conducted by the state, and religious institutions are to have nothing to do with it. It also forbids religious communities to operate hospitals, orphanages, institutions of welfare, or to own real estate.

The three "nationalized" churches in Albania are made to serve the same Marxist master plans as those prescribed for all Red states. To achieve this aim as soon as possible, the Albanian Reds acted most vigorously and cruelly. During the nearly two decades of Communist rule, all three churches and their adherents in Albania have constantly been under the most severe pressures. As many as 200 priests of the three churches have been murdered, executed without trial, or were sent to labor camps—a fact which, considering the small number of the Albanian population, should suffice to reveal the degrees of terror used by the Communist regime in the sphere of religion.

## 7. The Economic Situation

In the economic field, where hardships are felt by all, the Red regime boasts of being the champion of outstanding progress and of transforming Albania from a backward agricultural country to an advanced industrial-agrarian state. The Communists, as they usually do, take credit for all this progress. The fact is, however, that all that was accomplished in the pre-Communist era has been of vital importance to its present development—a fact that Enver Hoxha himself has admitted: "After the nationalization of smaller factories and plants, the people's government put them in their proper places, merged the smaller units into larger ones, as for example the oil mills, the textile and manufacturing plants, printing shops, *etc.*" (Radio Tirana, January 9, 1959).

When we analyze the Red regime's industrialization policy, we must recognize that it is based on an overweening presumption

entirely at odds with Albania's nature, circumstances, and tradition, which should give first priority to agriculture.

In order to proceed with the usual Communist five-year program, the regime continued to build more and more factories and plants when there was no demand for them, and when they had no usefulness to the population. On the other hand, progress has been made by increasing the production of mineral mines, particularly those of chrome ore, nickel ore, copper, coal, asphalt, and oil, and by creating artificial lakes for electric power and for other purposes.

These gains in the field of raw material production, however, have been constantly upset by serious failures and shortages. The annual percentage figures in production show for the most part, as is usual with Communist reporting, the positive side of the matter, a fact which can easily lead one to distorted conclusions. It is therefore advisable to take Red statistics with great care and some skepticism. Communist Albania, which started its economic program with a Two Year Plan (1949-1950), followed by two Five Year Plans in 1951-1955 and 1956-1960, and the third, current one from 1961-1965, has been continually plagued by economic instability. The plans have repeatedly been upset by innovations based on the latest "Soviet experience," as well as by an endless series of changes designed to adjust them to Moscow's economic interests. The current Five Year Plan is now faced with great difficulties because of the economic blockade set up by the Soviet Union and the European Communist satellites as a consequence of the Albanian Communist leadership challenge to Moscow.

This state of affairs has been aggravated by the lack of technicians, skilled workers, and administrative personnel, as well as of means of transport, which has caused shortages in output. Thus the production costs of many industries exceed by far the import cost of the items involved, a fact which underscores the futility of Red efforts to industrialize at all costs, and especially in such an agriculturally-oriented country as Albania.

A similar and even greater instability has plagued the regime's policy in agriculture itself. In order to win the support of the peasant population, which represents the majority of the Albanian people, the Communists at first introduced a so-called agrarian reform. Since only some 10 per cent of the population engaged in agriculture did not own land, the agrarian reform had little economic significance. Nevertheless, the reform was used by the Reds as an instrument of political propaganda in the initial phase of their agrarian program.

Soon after they had become "owners" of the land, the peasants were gradually forced to join collective farms. This program was met with



strong opposition by the rural population. As in the Soviet Union, those farmers who resisted collectivization were labelled „kulaks.” A series of new laws on taxation and compulsory deliveries favoring collective farmers were enacted, which discriminated against independent farmers. Terrorism increased, and farmers reluctant to join collectives were constantly faced with night visits by police, threats of forced labor, discrimination against their children in schools, difficulties in obtaining seeds, fertilizers, working machines, and other essential facilities.

At first the peasants expressed their resistance by the steadily decreasing yield of their farms. In 1951, however, passive resistance broke into open rebellion, and the regime was forced to abandon such measures; it declared that future collectives were to be formed voluntarily. At this time there were only 90 collectives, with a membership, of 4,500 peasant families, covering less than 3 per cent of Albania's cultivated area.

In 1955, after the regime had consolidated its position in the country and under renewed pressure from Moscow, the policy of forceful collectivization of the peasantry was resumed. Terrorism was intensified, and the membership of agricultural collectives steadily increased. Under such pressures, collectivization in the agricultural sector increased to 86 per cent of the arable land, with some 1,484 collectives and a membership of 115,277 peasant families. Thus was “socialization” of agriculture achieved, resulting in complete dispossession of the rural masses and their drastic regimentation as paid workers of the Communist “agrarian factories.”

## 8. The Economic Situation of the Workers

Communist propaganda in the world has time and again stressed the material needs of the working class, and claims that economic factors are of primary importance in the “Socialist state.” The Albanian Reds emphasize the rights that labor has won under their regimes. But there is little evidence to support these claims. It is true that the labor code guarantees certain rights and privileges to the workers—among them an eight-hour working day for six days a week, prohibition to employ children under 14 years of age, classification of workers according to skill, provisions for social benefits, and the like. However, most of these are merely paper guarantees. A great many of the state projects have been accomplished through forced labor and the voluntary “youth Socialist brigades.” The latest move of the Party is to “persuade” individual workers and entire brigades to put in 300, and even 500 work-days a year, which

renders the eight-hour day law pure fiction, since the majority of workers require ten to twelve hours a day to fulfill their tasks.

After nearly 20 years of the hardest work, the material situation of the Albanian working class under Communism stands as follows: The average monthly wage of a skilled worker ranges between 3,000-5,000 Leks, equivalent to some \$25-\$30 monthly. And here are the prices *per pound* of some important commodities: bread, 10 Leks; sugar, 60 Leks; coffee, 450 Leks; olive oil, 100 Leks; butter, 200 Leks; cheese, 110 Leks; meat, which is considered a luxury for ordinary workers, costs 100 Leks, and whole milk, also a luxury, costs 25 Leks a quart. One pair of shoes costs some 1,800 to 2,200 Leks, and a moderate suit around 7,000-10,000 Leks.

The trade unions, which allegedly protect the vital interests of the working class, are considered the most important official agency of the Party and state in "building socialism." The trade unions fully support and promote the economic plans of the regime, however these may affect the welfare of the workers. They help to boost production, prevent strikes, conclude collective agreements, determine wages, and they are instrumental in the rapid expansion of industry by relentlessly pushing the workers to surpass the quotas. The president of the Labor Council of the Albanian Trade Unions, Gogo Nushi, is a politburo man of the Party's Central Committee.

It is, therefore, small wonder that a Western newsman who visited Albania during the summer of 1962 described the situation of the country as "mired in misery, poverty, and stagnation."

## V.

# THE BREAK BETWEEN MOSCOW AND TIRANA

## Causes of the Conflict

**T**HE FIRST SIGN of disagreement between Moscow and Tirana appeared as early as 1955. When, after Stalin's death, the Soviet leaders Bulganin and Khrushchev tried to settle their differences with Tito's Yugoslavia, the two Albanian leaders, Party Chief Enver Hoxha and Premier Mehmet Shehu, were told to follow the same policy. They therefore softened their extremely aggressive attitude toward Belgrade, but did not rehabilitate Koçi Xoxe, who had been executed as a Titoist in 1949. They assumed, rightly, that to vindicate Xoxe would be to justify and re-strengthen Yugoslavia's position in Albania, which meant jeopardizing their own status and security. Their reluctance to go along completely with the new Kremlin policy was demonstrated over and over by their deep devotion to Stalin. In venerating Stalin, they sought to disarm any accusation that they were disloyal to the Soviet Union.

When Khrushchev began his policy of de-Stalinization in 1956, he caused a great upheaval within the Communist world, particularly in Poland and Hungary. The Albanian Red leaders, who also reacted negatively to this action, never carried out Khrushchev's order to de-Stalinize Albania.

Another reason for the existing ferment among the Communists would appear to be the fact that Mao Tse-tung, the Red Chinese leader, is unwilling to accept Khrushchev as the omnipotent leader of world communism. This personal difference grew gradually as Red China's power increased, and finally led to the present bitter rivalry for leadership between Moscow and Peking. Soviet Russia's continued interference in Chinese expansion of influence in North

Korea, North Vietnam, and other Asiatic countries, as well as its refusal to give Peking aid in its development of nuclear weapons and greater assistance in destroying Nationalist China, has doubtless had the effect of deepening these differences.

Fully aware of the dispute between the two Communist giants, the Albanian Party chiefs sided with Peking in the latter's "ideological warfare" with Moscow, in answer to Khrushchev's continued wooing of Tito, whom they rightly regard as their principal enemy and the greatest threat to Albania. Red China's might, its Stalinist ruthlessness, and, most of all, its uncompromisingly rigid attitude toward "revisionist Yugoslavia" were other factors that impelled Hoxha and Shehu to choose the "Party line" of Peking.

The Moscow-Peking dispute, which on the surface consists primarily of their conflicting interpretations of what Khrushchev terms his co-existence policy toward the Free World, became more open at a conference of Communist leaders in Bucharest (Rumania) in June, 1960. On this occasion Khrushchev tried in vain to preserve Communist unity under Moscow's leadership. Here, for the first time, the Albanian delegation openly backed the hard-line Chinese policy toward the Western world. In November of the same year, Khrushchev invited delegations of 81 Communist parties of the world to a conference in Moscow, where he again desperately renewed his efforts to realign all of them in support of Moscow.

Again the Albanian delegation, led by Party chief Enver Hoxha, after a stormy session in which Hoxha had a heated argument with the Soviet leader, strongly supported Peking's extremist attitude toward what Khrushchev termed peaceful co-existence with the West. Thus the unity of world communism was demonstrated to be a myth. Nevertheless, at first it was generally expected that Moscow, resorting to various means of bringing rebels to heel, would force tiny Albania back into line. And it was generally supposed that Peking, under pressure from Moscow supporters, would finally retreat.

Khrushchev tried in many ways to bring the Tirana chiefs to "reason." At first he tried to intimidate them through various moves in the diplomatic field. For that purpose, he held talks with Belgrade, and even Athens, both of which are considered as Albania's national enemies. Khrushchev went so far in his drive against Albania as to invite Mr. Sofokles Venizelos, a noted Greek politician, to Moscow, and to promise him a settlement of baseless Greek claims to Albanian territory by creating a so-called "Greek Autonomy" in Southern Albania.

This action gave the Tirana leaders a welcome opportunity to denounce Khrushchev for plotting with "revisionists, capitalists, and

bourgeois elements" against a Communist state. It also enabled them to justify to the Albanian people their hostility toward Moscow as being in line with the national interests of Albania. Khrushchev also attempted to overthrow Hoxha and Shehu through other Moscow agents within the Party, but the Albanian leaders were able to crush all such attempts, and they remain masters of their country today.

For some time the bitter Moscow-Tirana struggle went on behind the scenes. But in the course of the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow in November, 1961, Khrushchev publicly denounced the Albanian leaders, accusing them of hostility toward the Soviet Party and people, and of persisting in following the Stalinist cult. He demanded their exclusion from the "Socialist" camp. This move was adroitly frustrated by Chou En-lai, chairman of the Peking delegation, who backed the Albanian Reds. For the first time, the existing deep rift between the two Communist giants became known to the public. A month later the Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations with Albania, an unprecedented action within the Red orbit. Immediately thereafter, all East European Communist states formally followed this move. Later, however, it was learned that all of these countries had recalled their ambassadors from Tirana, leaving their interests to be attended to by *chargés d'affaires*.

Moscow adopted other drastic measures against Tirana. Trade and cultural relations were broken off, all credits granted for the third Five Year Plan were cut off, and all Soviet technicians and specialists were withdrawn from Albania. With them, except for some Czechoslovak technicians, all East European aides received strict orders to return to their countries. From that time on, although Albania was formally a member of the Warsaw Pact (the Communist bloc military alliance), and of COMECON (the Soviet-organized "Council for Mutual Economic Assistance"), it was excluded *de facto* from both organizations.

The moral, political and economic support that the Albanian Stalinists have received from Red China, however, has considerably weakened Premier Khrushchev's moves to resolve the sharp issues raised by Albania. As it now appears, the Kremlin's efforts are concentrated in persuading Tito's Yugoslavia to adopt some kind of action which would bring about a new pro-Belgrade, pro-Moscow regime in Tirana. While up to now it has not been possible to induce Yugoslavia to take such a grave step, there is a suspicion that it is seeking to weaken Tirana's present regime from within the country.

In the meantime, Enver Hoxha's regime remains as inimical as ever to the Yugoslav "revisionists," as well as to the "modern revisionists," a term the Albanian Communists use with the meaning, "Khrushchev and his group."



## VI.

### FOREIGN RELATIONS

#### 1. Albania and the Western World

**F**OR NEARLY two decades, now, the Tirana regime has hermetically isolated Albania and its people from the outside world. Except for carefully screened Party and government members and delegations, no ordinary citizen is permitted to leave the country, not even to visit the Communist-ruled states. Since Albania has no direct geographic contact with the "Socialist" states, she has been cut off politically, economically, and culturally from her neighbors, and artificially linked with an alien world thousands of miles away, at first with the Soviet Russian people, and more recently, with Far Eastern nations.

Repeated assurances have been given by the Tirana regime that it wishes to carry on friendly relations with all capitalist countries, and particularly with its neighbors. Yet, paradoxically, it continues to wage an unsurpassed propaganda campaign of hatred and vilification against the Western world, even after its open break with Moscow.

This may be explained by the fact that Tirana, as Peking's close and sole European ally, is committed to continue to maintain an extremist anti-Western stand, while, at the same time, it must avoid the creation of any impression of rapprochement with the West, in order to counter Moscow's propaganda attacks of having "sold itself out to the capitalists." Tirana maintains diplomatic relations with only six Western countries: France, Italy, Austria, Finland, Turkey and Brazil.

#### 2. Albania and Her Neighbors

The same negative spirit characterizes the relationship between Albania and her two neighbors, Yugoslavia and Greece. The situation



between the two Communist states, Yugoslavia and Albania, remains as critical as ever. No better are the relations between Albania and her southern neighbor, Greece. The Greek government's groundless claims to territories in South Albania give Red Tirana welcome opportunity to pose time and again before the Albanian people as defenders of the frontiers of the "Fatherland" against threats by the Greek "monarcho-fascists backed by American imperialists."

### 3. Albania and the Afro-Asian Countries

Belonging to a predominantly Moslem country which had in the past close relations with the Middle East and with North African lands, the Communist Albanians have felt impelled to act with particular vigor in these areas. Under cover of seeking diplomatic, trade, cultural, social, and even religious relations, they have been feverishly agitating in these countries, at first in the service of the Soviets, and at present for that brand of Marxism-Leninism of which both China and Albania are the spokesmen. Albania has diplomatic relations with the following twelve Afro-Asian countries, not counting Socialist states: the United Arab Republic (including Syria), Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Ethiopia, Algeria, Morocco, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, India, and Cambodia.

### 4. Foreign Trade

Until 1961 the major partners in Albanian foreign trade were the Soviet Union and the countries of the Soviet bloc. After the break with Moscow, it was thought that this rift might have grave effects on its trade with them. These fears, however, did not materialize, for Albania has renewed trade agreements with all the European Communist states except Soviet Russia. The main reason for this, it seems, is that Albania is the main and the cheapest supplier of chrome ore to these countries. Albania produces some 300,000 tons of chrome ore a year, of which 90 per cent is exported to those countries.

Of great importance to the Tirana regime, both politically and economically, are the agreements for cooperation in the economic, scientific and technical fields between Albania and Red China—an accord that gives to the latter the position that Soviet Russia enjoyed before in that Adriatic country. Peking has agreed to extend to Albania a loan of about \$123,000,000 for the period 1960-1965.

In 1962, trade with the Socialist countries made up 90.3 per cent of Albania's total foreign trade, of which Red China accounted 59.1 per cent, Czechoslovakia 17.4 per cent, and the other Red states 13.8

per cent. These figures show clearly how poor are the trade relations between Albania and the West. Apart from trade accords with Italy, Yugoslavia, Ghana, the United Arab Republic, Iraq, Austria, Brazil, and Cuba, Tirana has various types of trade arrangements with some West European firms. The volume of exchange with all these countries amounts to something less than 10 per cent of Albania's total foreign trade.

In the total volume of Albanian exports, minerals hold first place with 51 per cent, followed by industrial goods (33.5 per cent), and by agricultural produce (14.5 per cent). The main items of export are chrome ore, ferrous ores, petroleum, coal, asphalt, tobacco, cigarettes, cotton, and fruits.

## Appendix

### ALBANIA'S PRESENT PARTY AND GOVERNMENT LINE-UP (1963)

#### P A R T Y

- I. Politburo Members: Enver Hoxha  
Beqir Balluku  
Gogo Nushi  
Hysni Kapo  
Manush Myftiu  
Mehmet Shehu  
Rita Marko  
Spiro Koleka  
Ramiz Alia  
Haki Toska  
Adil Çarçani
- Candidate Members: Koço Theodhosi  
Pilo Peristeri  
Kadri Hasbiu  
Petrit Dume

#### II. Secretariat of the Central Committee

Enver Hoxha	—	First Secretary
Haki Toska	—	” ”
Hysni Kapo	—	Secretary
Rita Marko	—	”
Ramiz Alia	—	”

#### III. Party Control Commission

Petro Papi	—	Chairman
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## S T A T E

### IV. Chairman of Presidium of the People's Assembly (nominal head of state):

Haxhi Lleshi

### V. Chairman of People's Assembly:

Medar Shtylla\*)

## G O V E R N M E N T

### VI. Council of Ministers

Prime Minister:	Mehmet Shehu
First Deputy Prime Minister:	Spiro Koleka
"        "        "        "	Beqir Balluku
"        "        "        "	Manush Myftiu
Deputy Prime Minister:	Koço Theodhosi
"        "        "	Abdyl Kellezi
Secretary General of Council of Ministers (Feb. 12, 1959):	Spiro Rusha
Minister of People's Defense:	Beqir Balluku
"        "        Mines and Geology (Jan. 1, 1960):	Adil Çarçani
"        "        Industry (Jan. 1, 1960):	Xhafer Spahiu
"        "        Internal Affairs:	Kadri Azbiu
"        "        Foreign Affairs:	Behar Shtylla
"        "        Commerce:	Kiço Ngjela
"        "        Construction:	Josif Pashko*)
"        "        Communications:	Tonin Jakova
"        "        Agriculture:	Peti Shamblli
"        "        Finance:	Aleks Verli
"        "        Education and Culture:	Manush Myftiu
"        "        Justice:	Bilbil Klosi
"        "        Public Health:	Ciril Pistoli
Chairman of State Plan Commission:	Koço Theodhosi
Chairman of State Control Commission:	Shefqet Peci
State Attorney General:	Aranit Çela
President of the Supreme Court:	Shuajip Panariti
Chairman, Trade Unions:	Gogo Nushi

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\*) Died 1963.

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